

only one way to live by iwillbeyourgoal

Series: [the life in your kiss \[1\]](#)

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Summary:

“It’s okay, Nancy. I promise that eventually... it’s gonna be okay.”

She can tell that he’s not sure it will be, but it’s enough for now.

“Let’s lie down.”

(jonathan and nancy take up sleeping together)

only one way to live

She's with Steve.

She is *with* Steve.

She's with Steve, she knows she is, but—

But when she wakes up in cold sweats with visions of things bursting out of her walls and cold, slimy, suffocating cold, the number she frantically dials as she tries to slow her breathing isn't Steve's.

"H—hello?"

She lets out a shaky breath of relief at the sound of his voice.
"Jonathan."

(He'd convinced his mother to let him keep a phone in his room after Will came back so he could more easily talk to his friends. He's not sure if she knows that he really only has one.)

"Nancy? You okay?"

She squeezes her eyes shut and shakes her head, even though he can't see her. "No. I keep... seeing it. Everywhere. Every time I sleep. Things coming through the walls, f—from under my bed, it's everywhere—"

"Hey, hey, it's alright," Jonathan whispers, trying desperately to soothe her frenzy. "It's dead. Eleven killed it. We killed it. Remember it's dead?"

"I know, but that—could you just come over, please?"

He's slept over a couple of times since the first time, but he still hitches his breath when she asks. He almost feels honored that she associates him with safety and comfort. (*Or convenience*, someone shouts from the back of his mind, but he shuts them up.)

"Yeah. Yeah, of course. I'll see you in a bit."

They hang up and she sighs, rubbing her eyes with her fists until she sees starbursts. She really, really doesn't want to think too much about why her first instinct when she's scared is to go to a friend before her boyfriend.

"He gets it," she says to no one. "He just understands." It's not like anyone asked, but it's worth putting out into the universe.

She spends the time it takes for him to get to her house reciting all the bones in the body that she can remember. She gets to trapezium before she hears the soft *thud* that lets her know Jonathan's on the roof outside her window. When Steve sneaks in, he's quiet and agile and always surprises her a little. When it's Jonathan, she can tell right away – his steps are less practiced and a little clunkier.

Nancy thinks she prefers the noise nowadays; she's had enough of things that can appear with no warning.

The soft tapping on her window comes quickly after the first steps, and she rushes over to open it. As she does, she smiles (somewhat involuntarily, somewhat... not) at the sight of him. He returns it, but it comes with the sadness that seems to tint almost everything he does.

"Hey," she says.

"Hey," he says.

Stepping back to let him in, she can't help but laugh a little as he lumbers through her window and almost falls over. He turns to glare at her. "It's not my fault you have a window for tiny people."

"You're right," she says as she tries to hold back a smirk. "This is all on me."

There's a pause and she pulls at the hem of her shirt before he asks, "Are you alright? You sounded... pretty beat on the phone."

"I mean, not really," she answers honestly, "but I'm better now."

That you're here are the words left unsaid, but they're so obvious she might as well have shouted them.

"I know what you mean," he sighs, sitting down on the bed. "I can't really show it at home, you know, 'cause Will's still really traumatized. And I—I'm not saying it's worse for me. It's just, like, I wish I could tell my mom about what we went through and have it separated from what happened to him, you know?"

She nods vigorously. "Right. Mike's so upset about Eleven being gone, and everything they went through, and I'm like, my friend *actually died*." She pauses and swallows, blinking rapidly to discourage the sudden tears. "Barb's dead and she's never, ever getting out of there. And we're the only ones who know! What do I tell her mom, your daughter fucking *died* because I was too busy sucking face?"

"Hey," Jonathan interrupts, pulling her down beside him and placing a firm hand on her shoulder. "You don't get to blame yourself, okay? That's not something I'm allowing you. Barb – listen to me, Nancy – Barb did not die because of you. Blame and guilt are bad roads, beyond there be dragons, whatever. I learned after my dad left that that shit doesn't get you anywhere but angry. And we have enough to be angry about; we don't need this, okay? So don't. You haven't done anything wrong."

Nancy's eyes are now swimming with tears and she buries her face in his shoulder as sobs break, rippling through her body. Immediately he wraps her in his arms and squeezes, not much knowing how else to help.

The two stay like that for a while until her crying slows. He rubs circles into her back and leans forward to look at her.

"It's okay, Nancy. I promise that eventually... it's gonna be okay."

She can tell that he's not sure it will be, but it's enough for now. "Let's lie down."

He nods silently and takes off his jacket while she crosses to the other side of the bed. They've done this enough that now they have sides. Nancy tries not to think too much into that.

As she lies down and pulls the covers up to her chin, she looks at

Jonathan. He really isn't too attractive of a guy. She's not sure if she'd ever paid attention to him before Will went missing. But he was... he was good. There is something inside of him that radiates. Maybe it's his love for his little broken family, she wonders – whatever it is, she loves that he has it.

“Jonathan?” she says before she can stop herself. He turns and raises his eyebrows in response as he crawls into bed. “You're really incredible.”

She winces internally, wondering if he'll take it as lamely as it sounds. But he doesn't laugh – instead his big, brown eyes seem to soften as he looks at her.

“I, uhm—” he starts, knitting his brow together. “Thanks. I mean, so are you.”

They always keep their distance when they're in this situation, but she reaches a foot out under the covers to lightly touch his. “I honestly don't know how I'd be able to handle all of this without you,” she whispers.

He actually laughs a little at this. “I think you'd manage just fine. I don't know if you know this, but you're kind of a badass. Only one of us in this room can shoot a can first try. And I'll give you a hint: it isn't me.”

Preening, Nancy smirks at the compliment. “I'm pretty great, aren't I?”

“You really are.”

He says it so quickly and with such confidence that it creates a stunned sort of lull in the conversation.

Nancy knows he likes her. In this way, what they're doing isn't really fair. But he was there; he was the one to pull her out of the Upside Down. He was the one who helped her buy the weapons to kill the monster. He was *there* and he was *good*.

She scoots closer to him so that they're less than a foot apart. His hair flops in his eyes and she reaches to brush it out of the way, letting

her fingernails graze on his skin. His eyes flutter closed and he holds his breath. She lets her hand trail down to hold his face, rubbing her thumb slightly over his cheekbone.

He opens his eyes and even in the low light, she can see his pupils are blown. She decides she can be a little selfish and take a small part of what she wants. She deserves it.

She bridges the space between them and presses her forehead against his. Their breath intermingles and there are words there, too.

“It’s you,” he mutters. “It’s always you.”

She doesn’t respond, but as she reaches her hand out to grab his shirt and pull his chest against hers, she knows. Even as they drift off to sleep facing each other, limbs entwined, she knows.

It’s always him, too.